

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 BANGKO 00208 01 OF 02 061556Z

51

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BANGKOK 0208

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RUMTBK/AMCONSUL SONGKHLA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 CHIANG MAI 004

BANGKOK PASS AMCONSUL SONGKHLA

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, TH

SUBJECT: ELECTION REPORTING - PROVINCE CLOSE-UP OF LAMPANG

1. SUMMARY - LAMPANG IS SCENE OF SHARP ELECTORAL BATTLE AND SITE OF LARGEST US MILITARY INSTALLATION IN NORTH. WITH DEPUTY PARTY LEADER BOONTENG THONGSAWASDI ONLY SURE WINNER, SOCIAL ACTION PARTY (SAP) BEING SHARPLY CHALLENGED FROM LEFT AND RIGHT FOR REMAINING THREE SEATS. ALL FOUR EX-MP'S IN RACE BUT UNDER NEW PARTY BANNERS. FREE MOVIES, POSTERS AND HOUSE-TO-HOUSE CAMPAIGNING BEING EMPLOYED BY CANDIDATES TO WOO VOTERS, WHILE PERSONALITIES AND LOCAL ECONOMY

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 BANGKO 00208 01 OF 02 061556Z

ARE MAJOR ISSUES. "BANGKOK" AND CANDIDATES THEMSELVES ARE MAJOR

SOURCES OF FUNDS, AND VOTE-BUYING EFFORTS COMMON. RTG CONCENTRATING ON FACILITATING ELECTION PROCESS, WHILE RESTRAINING ITSELF WITH GREAT DIFFICULTY FROM LOCKING UP CONSULATE'S OWN FAVORITE CANDIDATE. PROSPECTS ARE FOR SAP TO TAKE TWO OR EVEN THREE SEATS WITH REMAINDER GOING TO VARIOUS OTHER PARTIES BASED, HOWEVER, ON INDIVIDUAL CANDIDATES' PERSONALITIES. END SUMMARY.

2. THE PROVINCE - LAMPANG'S 337,359 REGISTERED VOTERS WILL ELECT TWO MEMBERS OF NEW PARLIAMENT IN EACH OF TWO ELECTORAL DISTRICTS. PROVINCE IS OF PARTICULAR INTEREST BECAUSE IT IS SCENE OF SHARP ELECTORAL BATTLE AMONG CANDIDATES WHO ARE ALSO SENIOR PARTY OFFICIALS, IT IS NORTHERN BASE OF KHUKRIT'S SOCIAL ACTION PARTY (SAP), IT IS ONLY PROVINCE IN NORTH WHERE SOCIALIST FRONT PARTY CANDIDATE IS RUNNING STRONG, AND IT IS SITE OF LARGEST US MILITARY INSTALLATION IN NORTH. LAMPANG HAS ONLY LADY MAYOR IN THAILAND AND EDITOR OF MOST INFLUENTIAL PAPER IS ALSO FEMALE.

3. PARTIES - NINE PARTIES INCLUDING FOUR MINOR ONES ARE CONTESTING LAMPANG'S FOUR SEATS, BUT ONLY SAP IS FIELDING FULL SLATE OF CANDIDATES. SOCIAL JUSTICE PARTY OFFERS THREE CANDIDATES; SOCIALIST FRONT, FREE PEOPLE, LABOR, AND NEW FORCE TWO EACH. ALSO ENTERED ARE SINGLE CANDIDATES FROM DEMOCRAT, THAI NATIONAL REGENERATION, AND SOCIAL NATIONALIST PARTIES. ALL FOUR OF TOP VOTE-GETTERS IN 1969 ELECTIONS ARE RUNNING UNDER NEW PARTY LABELS, THUS LAMPANG VOTERS CAN BE FORGIVEN CYNICAL EXPECTATION THAT 1975 WINNERS WILL CHANGE PARTIES ONCE THEY GET TO BANGKOK IF PRICE IS RIGHT.

4. CANDIDATES - THERE ARE TWELVE CANDIDATES ENTERED IN THE FIRST ELECTORAL DISTRICT AND EIGHT IN THE SECOND. VIRTUALLY ALL OF THE CANDIDATES RESIDE IN DISTRICT ONE IN WHICH THE PROVINCIAL CAPITAL AND ONLY TOWN OF ANY SIZE IS LOCATED. DISTRICT ONE CANDIDATES INCLUDE:

A. SERM JINASAWASDI (52) OF SAP, FORMER DEMOCRAT MP AND LAWYER.

B. DUSIT PHANICHPAT (64) ALSO OF SAP, RETIRED RTG FORESTRY OFFICIAL WHO HAS STRONG SUPPORT AMONG LOCAL OFFICIALS BUT IS BEING ATTACKED FOR HAVING JAILED ILLEGAL LOGGERS WHILE IN BUREAUCRACY.
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PAGE 03 BANGKO 00208 01 OF 02 061556Z

C. DR. PHAITOON CRUAKAEW (41) OF SOCIALIST FRONT PARTY, FORMER MP AND PARTY OFFICIAL OF UTPP SPLINTER GROUP. PHAITOON RETURNED FROM HIS PHD. STUDIES AT SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY WITH ANTI-AMERICAN BIAS AND IS IN TIN MINING BUSINESS WITH YOUNGER BROTHER PHAITON (34) WHO IS ALSO SOCIALIST FRONT CANDIDATE BUT LIGHTLY REGARDED. PHAITOON IS CONSIDERED MOST RADICAL CANDIDATE WITH CHANCE OF WINNING IN NORTH.

D. INTOON VORAKUL (57) DEMOCRAT, LAWYER AND FORMER DEMOCRAT MP WHO WAS ELECTED IN 1969 ON COATTAILS OF BOONTENG THONGSAWASDI (BELOW) WHO HAS NOW SWITCHED TO SAP AND THUS CONSIDERABLY REDUCED INTOON'S CHANCES. LATTER ALSO HURT BY CHARGE HE RUNS ILLEGAL GAMBLING DEN FOR WHICH HE PAYS OFF POLICE.

E. SA-ARD PIYAWAN (50) SYG OF (MISNAMED) LABOR PARTY, PRESIDENT OF BANGKOK'S NORTHERNERS ASSOCIATION, WEALTHY AGENT FOR TRACTORS AND OTHER FARM EQUIPMENT; REGARDED AS ASSOCIATE OF FIRST SARIT, THEN NARONG.

5. IN DISTRICT TWO MAJOR CANDIDATES ARE:

A. BOONTENG THONGSAWASDI (62) DEPUTY LEADER OF SAP, EX-MP (DEMOCRAT) AND LAWYER.

B. BOONRUANG CHUM-IN-JAK (47) OF SAP, EX-MP (DEMOCRAT), WEALTHY CAR DEALER AND TOBACCO FACTORY OWNER.

C. PINIT CHANSURIN (38) OF SOCIAL JUSTICE PARTY, EX-MP (FREE PEOPLE) IS WEALTHY SINO-THAI MERCHANT.

6. THE CAMPAIGN - IN DISTRICT TWO POPULAR SAP CANDIDATE BOONTENG IS RUNNING STRONG BUT SEPARATE CAMPAIGN (E.G. HIS POSTERS PICTURE HIM ALONG WITH KHUKRIT) FROM BOONRUANG AND LATTER IS SUFFERING ACCORDINGLY. BOONRUANG'S PROSPECTS FURTHER DIMMED BY STRONG RACE BEING RUN BY PINIT. DISTRICT ONE IS WHERE MOST OF FIREWORKS AND UNCERTAINTY ARE OCCURRING. NEITHER SAP CANDIDATES, SERM AND DUSIT, ARE AS STRONG AS DISTRICT TWO'S BOONTENG. THE FORMER CAME IN FOURTH IN 1969 ELECTION AND THE LATTER IS RUNNING FOR FIRST TIME. DR. PHAITOON WAS TOP VOTE GETTER IN 1969 BUT HE HAS
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 BANGKO 00208 01 OF 02 061556Z

SWITCHED FROM UTPP TO SOCIALIST AND HAS ENGAGED IN MUD-SLINGING CAMPAIGN WHICH HAS DIMINISHED HIS POPULARITY. ALSO, PHAITOON FACES CHARGES NOW THAT HE HIRED BOYS TO REMOVE OTHER CANDIDATES' POSTERS. WHILE NEWLY RE-ELECTED LADY MAYOR (AND THANOM STEPSISTER) BOONTIAM SUVANA-AT TAPPED PHAITOON DEC 27 AS POSSIBLE WINNER, LAMPANG'S GOVERNOR SAMRAN TOLD ME JANUARY 2 THAT PHAITOON'S PROSPECTS WERE FADING. ON OTHER HAND, LABOR PARTY'S SA-ARD IS SPENDING LAVISHLY IN CAMPAIGN AND RUNNING WELL IN RURAL AREAS. DEMOCRAT INTOON NOW BRINGING UP REAR AMONG MAJOR CANDIDATES.

7. TECHNIQUES - CERTAINLY THE MOST POPULAR TECHNIQUE IN LAMPANG AS ELSEWHERE IN THE NORTH IS FOR CANDIDATES TO PROVIDE FREE MOVIES IN VILLAGE WATS AND MAKE THEIR PITCH BETWEEN REELS. MORE AFFLUENT CANDIDATES ARE ALSO USING POSTERS AND NEWSPAPER ADS

(COPIES OF THE PAPERS ARE THEN BOUGHT UP AND DISTRIBUTED FREE BY THE CANDIDATE). POORER AND MORE VIGOROUS CANDIDATES ARE ENGAGING IN HOUSE-TO-HOUSE CAMPAIGNING. SAP IS THE ONLY PARTY THUS FAR TO IMPORT PARTY LEADER FROM BANGKOK TO ASSIST IN CAMPAIGN. KHUKRIT MADE VERY EFFECTIVE APPEARANCE ON LAMPANG TV STATION DEC 26 AND AT WELL ATTENDED RALLY SAME NIGHT.

8. THE MEDIA - EXCEPT FOR SINGLE KHUKRIT APPEARANCE NOTE ABOVE BOTH TV AND RADIO HAVE BEEN UNUSED BY LAMPANG CANDIDATES. LADY EDITOR LEK PICHAYAKUL OF INFLUENTIAL LAMPANG WEEKLY "EKARAJ" TURNED DOWN REQUESTS FROM BOTH SENI AND KHUKRIT PRAMOTE TO RUN HERSELF ON THEIR RESPECTIVE PARTY TICKETS. HOWEVER, WHILE REFRAINING FROM OUTRIGHT ENDORSEMENT, LEK LEANS TOWARD SAP IN NEWS COVERAGE. (KHUKRIT IS RUMORED TO HAVE GIVEN HER 30,000 BAHT WORTH OF NEWSPRINT WHICH MIGHT ACCOUNT FOR HER SAP "TILT".) THE LABOR PARTY IS UNDERSTOOD TO HAVE PROVIDED FUNDS TO FOUR OF THE OTHER FIVE PAPERS IN THE PROVINCE. HOWEVER, EDITORIAL SUPPORT CANDIDATES HAS BEEN ABSENT EXCEPT IN THE CASE OF "PRACHARAT" WHERE CANDIDATE HIMSELF IS OWNER.

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PAGE 05 BANGKO 00208 01 OF 02 061556Z

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PAGE 01 BANGKO 00208 02 OF 02 061423Z

51

ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BANGKOK 0208

HW RPTD FOR YOUR INFO CHAING MAI 4 DTD JAN 4 1975
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FM AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI
TO RUMTBK/AMEMBASSY BANGKOK 2257
INFO RUMJOD/AMCONSUL UDORN 245
RUMTBK/AMCONSUL SONGKHLA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 CHIANG MAI 004

9. THE ISSUES - CERTAINLY PERSONALITIES IS MAJOR ISSUE, BUT
LAMPANG CANDIDATES ARE ALSO SHOWING CONCERN FOR STANDARD OF LIVING
AND PROMISING TO DO SOMETHING (UNSPECIFIED) TO RAISE IT FOR
LOCAL POPULATION. ANOTHER (AND RELATED) PROMISE CONCERNS INCREASING
AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION IN THE PROVINCE. THUS FAR, LOCAL US
MILITARY PRESENCE HAS NOT BEEN AN ISSUE.

10. FINANCES - MONEY FOR CAMPAIGN IS COMING FROM TWO MAJOR SOURCES,
BANGKOK PARTY TREASURIES AND PERSONAL FORTUNES OF AFFLUENT
CANDIDATES. VARIOUS LAMPANG BANKERS INSIST THAT NO FUNDS ARE
BEING LOANED FOR CAMPAIGN PURPOSES. HOWEVER, ONE SOURCE STATED
BANK PARTICIPATION IS IMPORTANT; BANKS ARE ADVISING REGULAR LOAN
CUSTOMERS DIRECTLY HOW TO VOTE. (SAP SYG BUNCHU ROTCHANASATHIAN'S
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PAGE 02 BANGKO 00208 02 OF 02 061423Z

BANGKOK BANK HAS THOUSANDS OF RURAL CUSTOMERS IN LAMPANG.) ONCE
COLLECTED, FUNDS ARE BING SPENT ON MOVIE ENTERTAINMENT AND POSTERS
BUT ALSO DIRECTLY TO BUY VOTES. THIS TIME VILLAGE HEADMEN ARE
ACCEPTING FUNDS FROM ALL COMERS AND LATTER ARE EXPECTING FORMER
TO DELIVER VOTES. WHILE HEADMEN DO INDEED LARGELY RETAIN THAT
POWER THEY CAN'T POSSIBLY EXERCISE IT ON BEHALF OF MORE THAN TWO
CANDIDATES AND MAY VERY WELL ACCEPT MONEY FROM ALL, THEN TELL
VILLAGERS TO VOTE AS THEY LIKE OR FOR HEADMEN'S OWN CHOICES.
WILIER CANDIDATES ARE DELIVERING ONLY HALF OF FUNDS AGREED TO
BEFORE ELECTION WITH PROMISE THAT REMAINDER WILL FOLLOW AFTER
WHEN VOTES ARE DULY ACCOUNTED FOR. THUS FAR, NO
CANDIDATE HAS RESORTED TO INGENIOUS TECHNIQUE OF PREVIOUS CAMPAIGN
WHEN A CANDIDATE PROVIDED VILLAGERS WITH ONE NEW SHOE EACH AND

DELIVERED ITS MATE ONLY AFTER VOTES WERE COUNTED.

11. RTG ROLE - GOVERNMENT SEEMS TO BE CONSCIENTIOUSLY CONFINING ITS ROLE IN LAMPANG TO EDUCATING PEOPLE HOW TO VOTE, INFORMING THEM OF WHO CANDIDATES ARE, AND ENCOURAGING THEM TO EXERCISE THEIR FRANCHISE. GOVERNOR SEEMED DISTURBED THAT KHUKRIT'S TV APPEARANCE MAY HA GIVEN UNFAIR ADVANTAGE TO SAP AND TOLD ME HE WOULD INVESTIGATE HOW APPEARANCE CAME ABOUT TO INSURE IT WAS LEGITIMATE. LOCAL POLICE HAVE NOT YET TAKEN ACTION ON COMPLAINT RE DR. PHAITOON'S ALLEGED REMOVAL OF RIVALS' POSTERS.

12. OUR CANDIDATE - MY OWN FAVORITE CANDIDATE IN RACE (INDEED, ONLY ONE WHO GIVES ME AS CHARACTER REFERENCE) IS SUTHEP PREUNG-PAMPOO OF FREE PEOPLE PARTY. SUTHEP (WISELY) CARRIES AT ALL TIMES MEDICAL CERTIFICATE TESTIFYING AS TO HIS SANITY. WHILE REGISTERED AS CANDIDATE IN DISTRICT TWO, SELF-STYLED "DR." SUTHEP (ONLY INSTITUTION WHERE ALL AGREE HE SPENT FOUR POST-GRADUATE YEARS WAS A BANGKOK INSANE ASYLUM) HAS BEEN CAMPAIGNING ENTIRELY IN DISTRICT ONE. BY THUS REMAINING UNKNOWN IN SECOND DISTRICT, SUTHEP APPARENTLY INTENDS TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF HUGH POSTER CAMPAIGN OF DISTRICT ONE'S SA-ARD EXHORTING VOTERS TO CHOOSE NUMBER 9 (SA-ARD AND SUTHEP ARE BOTH NUMBER 9 ON BALLOT IN THEIR RESPECTIVE DISTRICTS AND RURAL POPULATION OF DISTRICT TWO OFTEN VISITS LAMPANG CITY IN DISTRICT ONE). SUTHEP'S UNIQUE CAMPAIGN STYLE INCLUDES CRUISING RESIDENTIAL STREETS OF TOWN AFTER DARK AND CRASHING ANY PARTIES HE FINDS IN PROGRESS. AT BEGINNING OF CAMPAIGN THE GOOD DR. ACQUIRED ON CREDIT NEW PSYCHEDELIC VOLKSWAGON BUS WHICH HE INTENDS TO IMMEDIATELY DONATE TO KING AT CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 BANGKO 00208 02 OF 02 061423Z

CAMPAIGN'S END, THUS POSING DELICATE PROBLEM FOR CREDITOR. DR. SUTHEP CLAIMS TO HAVE LOCAL FRANCHISE FOR T-ETERNAL FUEL, AND FEW NIGHTS AGO ROUNDED UP 100 MONKS, HERDED THEM INTO HIS "FACTORY" AND PERSUADED THEM TO SOLICIT FUNDS FOR THIS ROYAL PROJECT FROM CROWD OF ONE THOUSAND CURIOUS ONLOOKERS GOVERNOR NOW INVESTIGATING SUTHEP'S PLANS FOR THESE FUNDS.

13. CONCLUSION - AS CAMPAIGN ENTERS FINAL THREE WEEKS, ONLY SAP'S BOONTENG SEEMS SURE WINNER AND LAMPANG'S OTHER THREE SEATS ARE UP FOR GRABS. VOTER INTEREST IS HIGH (EDITOR LEK EXPECTS 80 PERCENT TURNOUT) AND MISTAKES BY MAJOR CANDIDATES CAN SERIOUSLY HURT THEIR CHANCES. SAP SHOULD TAKE AT LEAST ONE OTHER SEAT WHILE EITHER LABOR, SOCIALIST FRONT, OR SOCIAL JUSTICE CAN WIN SINGLE SEATS. TWO ORTHREE WINNERS WILL BE EX-MP'S, I.E. 50-75 PERCENT OF TOTAL ELECTED IN PROVINCE, WHICH IS SAME PREDICTION HEARD GENERALLY IN NORTH FOR MAKE-UP OF NEW PARLIAMENT.

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